

Questions and Comments received regarding draft Cape May Water Supply Study Scope of Work

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Division of Watershed Management (DWM) would like to thank all those who attended the December 8, 2003 hearing and/or submitted comments. The following is a preliminary summary of the questions and comments received during or after the December 8, 2003 hearing. The questions and comments are paraphrased to represent intent and are not direct quotes. Only questions and comments pertaining to the scope of work will be posted. If you submitted comments by mail or E-mail and it does not appear below please contact Dave McPartland at (609)292-0837 or via E-mail at david.mcpartland@dep.state.nj.us. Please note that this is not a complete list of all questions and comments. This list will be updated as the DWM responses are available:

1. What was the first \$300,000 of the Water Supply Study spent on?

Response: The total funding in support of this study is \$2,000,000, \$300,000 was allocated to US Geological Survey (USGS) for costs associated with the Scope of Work development.

2. The Environmental Sensitivity study is critical part of the overall study.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement.

3. Cape May County should perform or oversee build-out analysis.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement the County of Cape May will participate in the build out analysis of the study.

4. Desalination should be considered in the study.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement, desalination will be one on the water supply alternatives evaluated in this study.

5. Non-conventional water systems should be looked at by the study.

Response: This study will explore and evaluate any economically and environmentally sound water supply alternative.

6. Local Water purveyors must work together in this effort.

Response: Local water purveyors participation will be critical in assisting the USGS and the DWM in developing and evaluating water supply scenarios as part of Task 3 and 4 of the Scope of Work.

7. The Water Resources Coordinating Council should be considered to assist in the study and implementation of recommendations.

Response: The DWM agrees that some entity will need to be created to implement the recommendations of the study. The Division encourages those agencies responsible for the distribution of public water in Cape May County to create such an entity.

8. Public Education regarding water supply issues is important in Cape May County. Public education regarding water supply issues in Cape May County was supported through the watershed management process until the funding was withdrawn.

Response: The DWM recognizes that the restructuring of the watershed management process did remove a source of funding for education and outreach opportunities. However, the watershed funding was never intended to support long term efforts beyond the 4 year contract period. Every public water supply allocation permit issued by the Department includes public education requirements. It therefore is the responsibility of the individual purveyors to educate the customers of that system.

9. Watershed Management and the Study should be married.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement and will coordinate with the WMA 16 watershed group as the study progresses.

10. The DWM should post quarterly progress reports regarding the study on the Division's website.

Response: The DWM agrees that quarterly reporting on status be made available to the public. The DWM website would be a logical place to post this information.

11. The study should emphasize desalination and wastewater reuse.

Response: This study will evaluate desalination and wastewater reuse in the water supply alternatives considered in Phase 3 Task A.

12. Will existing groundwater withdrawals impacts be mitigated?

Response: The Bill sponsoring this study calls for design of a water supply system to meet the current and future needs of Cape May County while avoiding ecological and groundwater impacts. One of the objectives of this study will be to establish limits of saltwater intrusion, stream depletion and habitat impact to be used in determining acceptable pumping limits.

13. Has the NJDEP begun to deny water allocations based on the Gibson Bill or the Water Supply Allocation Rules? What projects have been denied water allocation permits, or have been required to recycle water?

Response: To date the Department has not denied any allocation permits based on the Gibson Bill legislation. Beer World (Ponder Lodge) in Lower Township was recently denied an allocation permit based on the rules governing allocation permit review. The permit was also denied due to the golf courses proximity to the Lower Township MUA treatment facility making wastewater reuse a viable option for irrigation water supply.

14. Representatives of the environmental community should be invited to all meetings; the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) should be stakeholders in all meetings.

Response: The USFWS and NMFS will participate in this study as indicated in the scope of work in Phase 3 Task C (evaluating ecological sensitivities specific to each scenario and Task D (develop recommendations for long term hydrologic and ecological monitoring). The environmental community will be invited to all public meetings.

15. Some Cape May County withdrawals have already surpassed regulatory thresholds. This is contrary to NJDEP Water Supply Allocation Rules regarding safe or dependable yield. Will allocations cease in these areas, and will restoration of ecosystems and ground water be a goal in these areas?

Response: Existing water supply allocations will be affected, the extent to which these allocations will be modified will be determined by this study.

16. The Cost Effectiveness study should be long-term and take into account the potential loss of fisheries revenue from impacted ecosystems.

Response: The DWM disagrees. The cost effective analysis of each water supply scenario will be based on the estimated cost for implementation of that scenario. It is the goal of this study to design water supply alternatives while avoiding impacts to groundwater and ecosystems of Cape May.

17. Has the study of summer population impacts been stressed enough, as salt water intrusion does not abate once it has occurred?

Response: Water demand projections initiated in Phase 1 Task B will need to account for seasonal population changes in the municipalities of Cape May County.

18. The 800-Foot Sand aquifer reportedly takes 10,000 years to recharge. This resource, while large, is finite, and already shows impacts of salt water intrusion in Cape May and Atlantic County areas. What are the goals of the Scope of Work for a sustainable water supply for the region?

Response: For the purpose of this study sustainable has been defined as preventing the saltwater interface from reaching any of the supply wells to be utilized in the selected water supply design at the 50 year build-out (volume of water demand) for a 100 year period of time.

19. Mandatory year-round water conservation measures should be implemented now as one measure to provide more sustainability of the water supply. Many local residents and visitors are unaware of any water supply problem.

Response: Water conservation options will be identified and evaluated in Phase 1 Task B of this study.

20. How will implementation of the study's recommendations be funded?

Response: The funding available in support of this study did not provide for funding of implementation.

21. Will the study consider groundwater usage in Atlantic County?

Response: Yes, groundwater usage in Atlantic County will have to been considered in the development of water supply scenarios for Cape May County.

22. Proposed water supply alternatives should not result in degradation of any wetlands, streams or river systems within the Great Egg Harbor or Cape May watersheds.

Response: The DWM agrees that the selected water supply scenario should not result in the degradation of any ecosystem in such a manner as to change the function of that particular ecosystem.

23. The USFW and National NMFS should participate in Phase 2A.

Response: As indicated in Phase 3 Task C and D. the USFW and NMFS will participate in the evaluation and application of the results of Phase 2 Task A (Ecological Sensitivities study).

24. Public involvement should be emphasized in Phase 3 Task A-Develop Water Supply Scenarios.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement and it is reflected in the scope of work.

25. Build-out analysis should begin immediately.

Response: The DWM agrees, development of the data and methodology for the build-out analysis is currently underway.

26. A lead entity needs to be established for implementation of the study's recommendations.

Response: The DWM agrees that some entity will need to be created to implement the recommendations of the study. The Division encourages those agencies responsible for the distribution of public water in Cape May County to create such an entity.

27. Every effort should be made to complete this project within the next two (2) years.

Response: The DWM goal is to complete the study within 2 years of finalizing the scope of work.

28. The build-out analysis needs to be based on a 50-year planning horizon, which considers both the seasonal and non-seasonal water supply requirements of Cape May County.

Response: The DWM agrees with this statement as reflected in Phase 1 Task B of the scope of work.

29. Only water supply alternatives which will rely on the Holly Beach Surface Aquifer should be assessed in detail in regards to the Ecological Sensitivities study.

Response: The DWM agrees, only the unconfined aquifer pumpage will need to be evaluated for ecological impacts.

30. To the extent that groundwater depletion and/or stream flow are determined to be a problem as a result of the need to rely on withdrawals from the surface aquifer in an isolated area of the County, consideration can be given to the use of adequately treated wastewater to recharge or supplement the base flow of affected areas.

Response: Reuse of wastewater will be considered in this study.

31. Is the wetland classification system proposed Environmental Sensitivities portion of the study valid for Cape May County?

Response: Yes, this portion of the study will be using an established classification system to evaluate and compare those areas subject to groundwater withdrawal influence to those areas not influenced groundwater pumpage. This information will be used to establish the sensitivity of these systems as related to potential groundwater withdrawals.

32. Development of a water supply source outside the county should be considered in this study.

Response: The DWM disagrees, Assembly Bill 2001, #658 (Gibson Bill) calls for developing water supply alternatives within Cape May County.

33. Performing a cost/benefit analysis regarding proposed water supply alternatives is important and should be considered earlier than proposed.

Response: The DWM disagrees. The cost effectiveness/feasibility analysis cannot take place before the ecological impacts are evaluated.

34. Education regarding the need to conserve water is important for the County's tourist population.

Response: The DWM agrees as to the importance of water conservation education, however public education goes beyond the scope of this study. Every public water supply allocation permit issued by the Department includes public education requirements. It therefore is the responsibility of the individual purveyors to educate the customers of that system

35. Regarding Phase 1 Task C, the potential threat to groundwater quality by septic systems, landfills, and dredge spoil disposal should be considered and investigated;

Response: Existing aquifer water quality will have to be evaluated in considering potential use for potable water supply as part of a water supply alternatives considered under this study.

36. Regarding Phase 3 Task D, this task should specify what agency or agencies will be responsible for long term monitoring. A safeguard should be included against failure of the responsible agencies to carry out the monitoring program.

Response: Monitoring requirements will be established through water allocation permits issued by the Department.